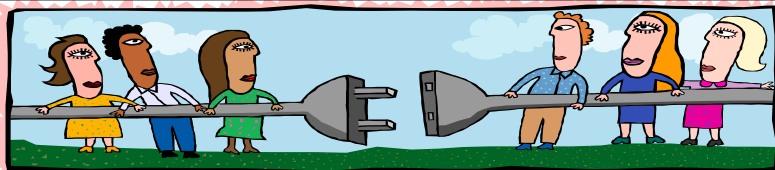


Consumer Connection



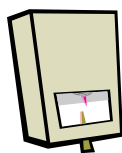
Issue 1 - January 2002

A quarterly publication of the Missouri Public Service Commission
Public Information & Education Department

Weatherization Tips

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖
Winter has arrived and along with the cold weather, comes higher utility bills.

What can you do???



Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable. For each degree you lower your thermostat, you could save about 3 percent on your heating bill.

Close an unoccupied room that is isolated from the rest of the house, such as in a corner, and turn down the thermostat or turn off the heating for that room or zone. However, do not turn the heating off if it adversely affects the rest of your system.

Look for dirty spots in your insulation, which often indicates holes where air leaks into and out of your house. You can seal the holes by stapling sheets of plastic over the holes and caulking the edges of the plastic.

Test your home for air tightness. On a windy day, hold a lit incense stick next to your windows, doors, electrical boxes, plumbing fixtures, electrical outlets, ceiling fixtures, attic hatches, and other locations where there is a possible air path to the outside. If the smoke streams travel horizontally, you have located an air leak that may need caulking, sealing, or weather-stripping. You



can also check for leaks by wetting your fingertips and running them around the edges of windows and doors, or hold up a tissue and see if it waves. Another tip -- close the door on a dollar bill. If it pulls out easily, your door is not sealed properly.

Install rubber gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on exterior walls.

When the fireplace is not in use, keep the flue damper tightly closed. A chimney is designed specifically for smoke to escape, so until you close



it, warm air escapes. If you have to use a space heater, make sure you use it properly. Make sure it's been tested safely and has been approved by a certified testing organization. Don't place it within 3 feet of anything flammable. Keep children away. Always turn it off when you go to bed or leave your home.

If possible, purchase the type of heaters that sound an alarm or turn off automatically if they are tipped over. Never use propane heaters, hibachis, barbecues, or any heater with an open flame indoors. These heaters produce carbon monoxide, which is a clear, odorless gas that can suffocate humans and animals.

Lowering your gas water heater from 140 to 120 degrees can reduce gas use by 20%. Check the manufacturer's recommendation regarding the use of a water heater blanket. Wrapping your electric water heater in a water heater blanket can reduce energy use by 10% - 18%.



During the heating season, keep the draperies and shades on your south-facing windows open during the day to allow sunlight to enter your home and closed at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.

Use kitchen, bath, and other ventilating fans wisely; in just 1 hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of warm air. Turn off fans as soon as they have done the job.



Remember: Using portable heaters can be costly. Use them only to warm rooms that don't get enough heat or in homes without central heating systems. Turn off portable heaters when the room is unoccupied. **DO NOT use an extension cord with your portable heater.** The cord can become overheated and start a fire.

A major air leak that's been overlooked until recently is forced-air ductwork. In many homes, particularly those with crawl spaces, ductwork accounts for one-half of the air leakage.

You can fix large holes and reattach disconnected ducts yourself. But because sealing ductwork can change interior air pressures that affect venting of fireplaces, wood stoves, and gas and oil furnaces, major duct sealing should be done only by insulation or heating contractors that use a sensitive air pressure gauge. They can ensure airflows are properly balanced and venting systems are carrying combustion gases safely outside.

Single-pane windows are another major cause of winter discomfort. Besides losing heat rapidly, cold window surfaces make you feel chilly when you're next to them - even when your heating system is maintaining a supposedly comfortable 70-degree air temperature.

For just \$5 to \$10 per window, you can improve performance of single-pane windows significantly with interior plastic storms. They warm up the interior surface of the window, reduce air leaks around loose window sashes and reduce condensation problems. They're easy to install, and some types are reusable every year.



For the Missouri Public Service Commission's Cold Weather Rule and our emergency amendment -- visit our website at:

<http://www.psc.state.mo.us/publications.asp>

For heating assistance and energy-related information -- check out these websites:

www.consumer.gov/sentinel/
www.fraud.org/news/news.htm
www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/extremecold
www.dnr.state.mo.us/de/homede.htm
www.dss.state.mo.us/dfs/eabrochure.htm

Cold Weather Rule

Facts about the Emergency Amendment:

Companies: Applies to **any natural gas company regulated by the MoPSC, excluding Missouri Gas Energy (MGE) and Atmos Energy Corporation, which includes the United Cities and Greeley divisions (Atmos).** MGE and Atmos have challenged the Commission's emergency amendment in circuit court. Currently, MGE and Atmos are required to follow the PSC's standard Cold Weather Rule. See Cold Weather Rule pamphlet for information.

Time Period: The emergency amendment took effect November 18, 2001 and continues until the Cold Weather Rule period ends on March 31, 2002.

Reconnection: The gas utility shall restore service with an initial payment of 25% of the pre-existing arrears or \$250, whichever is less, if the customer's gas service has been disconnected for failure to keep a previous cold weather rule payment agreement.

Balance on Account: The balance shall be paid in equal installments in the following 18 months. This period may be shortened or extended upon mutual agreement between the gas utility and the customer. Any other fees associated with restoration of service may also be deferred. (This installment payment will be in addition to monthly budget or level pay amounts.)

Deposits: No deposits will be required of any customer except for amounts owed due to unauthorized use.

Security Deposits: The natural gas utility is required to apply the customer's security deposit plus any accrued interest toward the delinquent amount to eliminate or reduce the amount required to prevent disconnection.

Late Payment Charges: Late payment charges will not be assessed on deferred amounts of any agreement, nor is the gas utility allowed to charge the customer interest on the account balance for the deferral period.

Who to Contact:

Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Hotline **1-800-392-4211**
or email: psc@mail.state.mo.us

Mail your inquiry or complaint to:



Missouri Public Service Commission
Consumer Services Department
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0360

